

NRC AGM November 16th 2020

Recreational and Explore Rowing report

As a result of the pandemic situation the year has been largely blank as far as recreational rowing is concerned. British Rowing hasn't issued advice on the use of stable boats in a Covid secure manner.

I am no longer involved in recreational rowing and I would like to stand down from this role.

Sunday League

The ninth season of the Sunday League was due to have started in April 2020 but early rounds of the series were cancelled as the Coronavirus escalated, and in May the decision was taken to cancel the remainder of the season. Rules were expected to have remained the same as last year but as there have been no events it hasn't been possible to assess any need for change.

Planning for next year has commenced. John Ord of Tyne ARC joined the organising group early in the year and Caroline Scholl of Durham ARC has now left.

Hexham, Talkin Tarn and Ebchester appointed new co-ordinators for the League this year and have also expressed willingness to stage a round in 2021, as have Tyne ARC and Tyne United.

Tees and Durham don't have a team or a co-ordinator and are unable to offer a round. Berwick and Tynemouth are interested in taking part but haven't indicated date preferences.

A draft schedule of rounds has been drawn up for 2021 taking account of tides, although a number of uncertainties remain. The extent to which clubs are willing to share boats for events is unclear. Under current Covid-19 guidelines an event where boats and equipment are shared between crews would be impractical.

Rounds would be expected to offer the usual mix of splash & dash races and skills heads. Talkin Tarn are willing to host a sweep-oar skills round. Ebchester would be a candidate for sculling skills, but the nature of the round needs to be determined. The intention is for it to be a sculling skills event as there is no provision for a round of this type at any other location. The site at Ebchester is too small to host a conventional Sunday League event so a round on the River Derwent would be non-standard e.g. using doubles rather than quads, and would therefore not count towards league points and might thus attract a lower number of entries.

Planned building work on the Ebchester clubhouse has been delayed but the date when the work will be carried out is as yet unknown. Ebchester will be unable to host a round on the River Derwent while work is ongoing. Their alternative proposal is to stage the round at Derwent Reservoir Sailing Club. However it hasn't been possible to carry out a site assessment at the reservoir as the Sailing Club has not opened to rowers this year because of the pandemic, and it is now closed to all members over the winter.

It had been hoped that attendance at events would improve but with few clubs able to run learn to row courses this year, and with those that have being restricted to single sculling, this looks less likely.

I understand that the Masters Committee is looking into devising a competition for novices along similar lines to the Sunday League. This might offer greater hope for the future.

I am no longer taking part in the series and am unable to attend rounds. It would be beneficial to host clubs to have someone on the organising group who can be at events, ideally who is already a participant or supporter of the Sunday League.

Touring

Rowing tours in this country have also drawn a blank because of Covid-19, with the annual UK Tour to the Middle Thames postponed and now rescheduled for July 29th to August 1st 2021.

The Recreational Rowing Committee has been working diligently on a rewrite of the Tourers Guide documentation, originally published by British Rowing in 2012 but now out of print. Further input will be required from BR before this can be relaunched as online documentation, possibly along with a webinar to attract more rowers into touring.

As an alternative a 'virtual tour' was organised where documentation about the route was provided and an online meeting was organised for August 29th where tourers could meet socially and take part in a quiz. Around 30 people attended the meeting and a lesser number took part in the quiz.

Locally the Great Tyne Row planned for August 15th 2020 also had to be cancelled.

It has been established that British Rowing still has around £10k remaining in the Charles Stanley boat fund, and that there may be some promotion to encourage future support. Contact has also been made with the National Watersports Centre at Nottingham who are willing for additional equipment to be located there for running courses and mini-tours.

The need for introductory coach training has been recognised but BR is very short of funds to develop anything.

Colin Lawson